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## Multidimensional Social History of Television : Social Uses of Finnish Television from the 1950s to the 2000s

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# Multidimensional Social History of Television

## Social Uses of Finnish Television from the 1950s to the 2000s

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*The article discusses the social uses of television from the late 1950s to the mid 2000s. In the tradition of media ethnography, it depicts both the structural and relational uses of television. It looks at changes of watching television in social intercourse: in family viewing and social life outside the home. The primary sources for the study comprise two collections of written reminiscences about television in Finnish everyday life. The article shows how multidimensional the uses of television have been over the decades and how TV has played often an important role in social life. Looking broadly at the findings, you could say that despite the many technological and cultural changes in television's history, most of the main features of television habits remain. TV still is a social family media.*

**Keywords:** audience; broadcasting; media ethnography; Finnish television; media history; social history

As in several other developed Western countries, social intercourse diminished a great deal towards the end of the twentieth century in Finland, too, particularly during weekends. At the same time, however, time use surveys (Niemi & Pääkkönen 2001, 36, 42) indicate that leisure time increased approximately one hour a week. Television's role in this development is unquestionable. As it spread aggressively in the United States in the 1950s and in Europe mainly in the 1960s, television influenced not only communication, but also a new social life. Being at the heart of post-war modernism, it offered models for living and for taking part in an increasingly consumption-oriented lifestyle that was mostly private and revolved around family.

In the past twenty years, the role of digitalisation has been even more important for privatisation, with computers and the Internet keeping people at home and mobile phones making personal

communication considerably easier. Despite the fact that it is considered that digitalisation makes media use and, consequently, social media more fragmented and individualistic, there are also signs of media becoming more social in the form new social media. However, this social networking mostly takes place virtual reality, for instance, on Facebook and Twitter. Television is also thought to be turning into a more and more personal medium, as both television itself and its audiences are becoming more fragmented. Could it be that digital television's abundant supply and the possible fragmentation resulting from it means that TV might lose its role as the family-centred social media?

This article examines Finnish television from socio-historical perspective. I will look at how television has related to social intercourse in Finland, and whether its influence has been only regressive. It is interested in the socio-cultural implications of television, particularly its influence on social intercourse, and, in general, issues related to the social aspects of television. The television programmes themselves are a secondary focus in the study – how they affect viewers' everyday lives (shared favourite programmes, rhythms of life, visiting neighbours, family relations, etc.)

The primary sources for the study include two collections, written reminiscences about television in the Finnish everyday. This type of oral history data has rarely been used in media studies.

Collecting written reminiscences, ethnographic writing, has a long tradition in the Finnish history and folklore studies, and methodologically they have been categorised under the oral history research data. The corpus includes two written reminiscences. The name of the first data set, a written collection, is 'Elokuva ennen ja nyt' (Cinema in the Past and Present); it has been collected by the Finnish National Board of Antiquity in 1996 (6 800 pages, 845 respondents). One part of the memoirs concerns television, and it has not been analysed previously. The sample

of the total data is 246 respondents (65 men, 181 women). About 90 per cent of the respondents were born before 1955. To cover the experiences of the younger generations as well, the media memories of students were collected during a course on media history in The University of Helsinki during the autumn 2005. This data consists of 87 respondents (32 men, 53 women, 2 sex unknown), born mostly in the early 1980s.<sup>1</sup>

The Finnish television is divided, according to John Ellis (2000), into three periods. The first period, from the 1950s to the 1980s, was the *era of scarcity*. This was the phase of the development of public service broadcasting. Television tended to present definitive programming to a mass audience. The second phase, the *era of availability*, lasted until the millennium and it meant the explosion of channels and programmes through cables, satellites and videos. Television became an important vehicle for transmitting and creating post-modern culture. Now we are living in the *era of plenty*, which is linked to the increasing of multiple of channels, digitalisation, (technical and economic) convergence and effective global media markets. In Finland, this means, roughly speaking, the years 1956–1987 (era of scarcity), 1987–2001 (era of availability) and 2001 onwards (era of plenty). In 2000s the growing interest towards the Finnish television history has produced analyses (see Pajala 2006; Elfving 2008; Wiio 2007) referring to the categories by Ellis with some minor differences to my periods. The idea that we are living in the era of plenty now can also be found in the studies of the digitalisation of Finnish television accordingly (see Näränen 2006; Kangaspunta 2007).

Finnish television audiences were already being studied in the late 1960s, however. When the uses and gratifications approach was rediscovered in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, it was mostly due to the fact that television had become the most important medium in people's daily lives. At that time, the research conducted by the national broadcasting companies was linked to the growing









































if the models are reasonably accurate, preview what Mars Environmental Dynamics Analyzer (MEDA), an integrated full suite of sensors designed to characterize the climate near the Martian surface, will observe. The MEDA sensor suite [Rodriguez-Manfredi et al. 2020 companion paper in this Special Issue] includes a dust and optical radiation sensor (with a dedicated camera SkyCam), a pressure sensor (PS), a relative humidity sensor (HS), a wind sensor (WS), five air temperature sensors (ATS), and a thermal infrared sensor for upwelling infrared flux and ground temperature determination (TIR). As with all meteorological measurements on any planet, accommodation of the sensors is critical. In the case of MEDA, all the sensors are located within the thermal and mechanical contamination envelope of the rover, although the Mars 2020 Perseverance rover sensors are better placed to reduce the potential effects of contamination compared to the Curiosity rover [Rodriguez-Manfredi et al. 2020 companion paper in this Special Issue]. This potential for instrument cross-contamination effects will need to be considered when validating the results presented here.

One of the goals of this paper is to present predictions of the meteorology parameters for comparison to observations after Mars 2020 Perseverance rove lands, but also to provide advance predictions of the meteorological phenomena and seasonal changes that might impact operations, from both a risk perspective and from the perspective of being better prepared to make certain measurements. For example, knowing when wind and hence saltation may be strongest, as a function of time of day and season, will be valuable for guiding concept of operations (CONOPS) and deciding when it might be good to take measurements, what conditions are expected, and how to better measure that process. It will also be useful for understanding risks to delicate instrumentation, such as cameras placed near the surface. Understanding when water abundances may peak and when the lowest temperatures are expected, may both be useful for planning campaigns linked to cloud observations or surface-atmosphere exchange of water vapor. Another goal is to demonstrate where there is disagreement between models, which motivates in situ measurements of the near-surface atmosphere.

Modest confidence in the models' ability to predict the meteorology is justified because they have been shown to reproduce observations with good fidelity in the limited number of locations where data is available [PGR16; Newman et al. 2017]. However, determining the validity of model predictions has often been hampered by issues with the meteorological datasets, due to e.g. sensor damage [Newman et al. 2017], excessive noise at cold temperatures [Gómez-Elvira et al. 2014], and/or placement of sensors in close proximity to heat or cold sources [Banfield et al. 2020] or in locations subject to mechanical interference. A more comprehensive analysis of the atmospheric circulation is given in a companion paper in this Special Issue [Newman et al. 2020 hereafter N20].

## 2 Numerical Experiments Design and Configuration

### 2.1 Mars Regional Atmospheric Modeling System (MRAMS) Configuration

A full description of the MRAMS model is included in Rafkin and Michael (2019) with physics options and initialization similar to PGR16. For this study, MRAMS is configured using seven grids with the innermost grids centered on Mars 2020 Perseverance rover landing site location inside Jezero crater, Mars [77.4298 °E, 18.4663 °N] (Fig. 1). The horizontal grid spacing at the center of the seven grids is 240, 80, 26.7, 8.9, 2.96, 0.98 and 0.33 km respectively.























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<sup>2</sup> This article is based on a project (Kortti 2007) concerning the arrival, diffusion and integration of television and its changing technological and cultural role and impact on the everyday life of the Finns and their worldviews during the period from the mid-1950s to the 21st century. Besides the institutional, economic, social and cultural narrative of the Finnish television, there is also an analytic chapter about the changes in Finnish TV-viewing in the study. The objects of research are (1) the role of television as an everyday commodity, the impact of television on the (2) worldviews and (3) social interaction of Finns. The discussion of television in social intercourse is divided to the study of changes in family viewing, gender preferences and in social life outside home.

<sup>3</sup> John Fiske (1987; 1989a; 1989b) took Certeau's view to the extreme, believing that people are opposed to everything that the system has to offer and do what they want with it; in short, they are ideal everyday heroes.

<sup>4</sup> Television is definitely present in public spaces as well. On television outside of the domestic sphere see e.g. McCarthy 2001.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of atomised generation refers to a nuclear- or mosaic-like generation, the smallest parts that move vibrantly and dynamically in the field of cultural phenomena. Atomisation can be presented as a large scale process that cuts through a generation. The freedom and requirement of choice is characteristic of the life of the atomised generation. In Finland, the concept is used by the scholar Mikko Salasuo. See Salasuo 2006 (with English Summary).

<sup>6</sup> Before the 1950s Finland was the least developed country in Scandinavia, but by the early 1970s it had assumed the typical form of most industrialized societies in the world. (Senghaas 1985, 71–80)

<sup>7</sup> About the history of Finnish television see Salokangas 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Before Facebook, IRC-Galleria was the largest social networking site in Finland. The registered users can present the pictures and communicate with each other in various ways. The average age of the users is approximately 20 years.

<sup>9</sup> Research on fans of TV programmes has become an independent branch of research, fan studies, which has been recently done to some extent in Finland (see e.g. Ross & Nightingale 2003, 120–145; Nikunen 2007).

<sup>10</sup> The live broadcast from the Independence Day reception in the Presidential Palace on the 6th of December has dominated the viewer rates overwhelmingly for decades. The idea of the programme is, in short, that the presidential couple receive Finland's political and cultural elite and diplomats from embassies in front of the television cameras, after which they are filmed dancing. In addition, some of the guests are interviewed. The most important issue are, however, the evening dresses and coiffures of the female guests.

<sup>11</sup> A potato and anchovy casserole (traditional Scandinavian meal).